

“He Inspired Others”:

An Interview with Cesar’s Grandson

Migrant workers are farm laborers who move around the country to pick different crops as they ripen.

Why should young people know about Cesar E. Chavez?

Fernando Chavez, a 13-year-old grandson of Cesar E. Chavez, responded,

“Children should know what my grandfather did so they will be inspired to help others. My Tata (grandfather) helped lots of families. Just as others gave food to help his family, my grandfather gave away food and clothing to help others. He talked to people about what to do so they could help themselves. I hope that I, too, can help those in need. When I see families living in campers and trucks, I feel so sad. I hope that migrant families can live a normal life, in a normal house.”

What do you remember about your grandfather?

“I had a birthday, then just three days after, Grandfather died. Many, many people came to pray and give final thanks for all that he had done for them. My dad reminds me that on that day, I took my sandwich and went to eat it by his graveside; my last moments with Tata. My family and I really miss him, especially at Christmastime. Tata loved being with his (33) grandchildren.

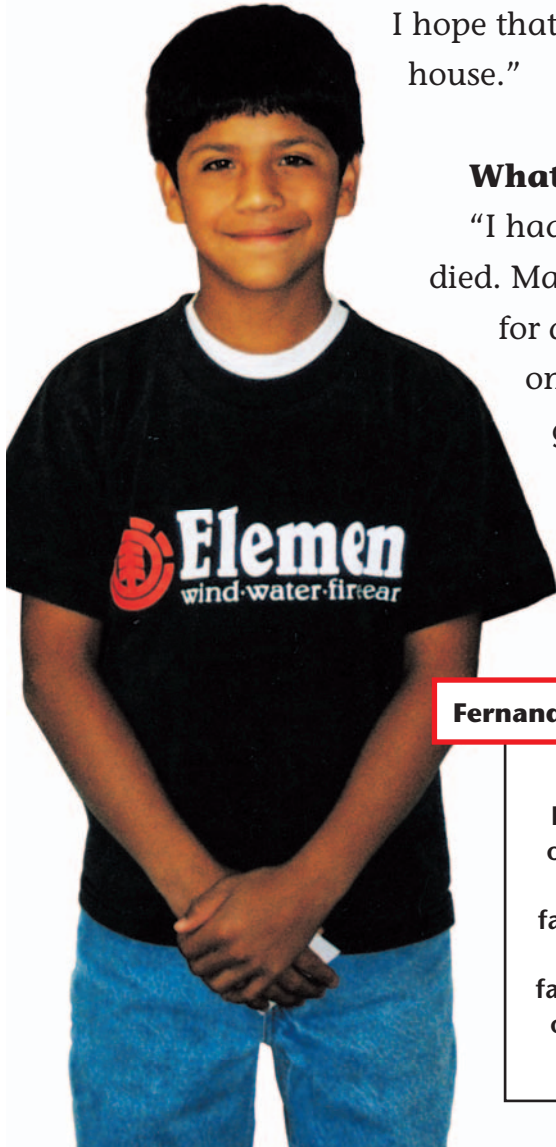
“My grandfather also loved his dogs. He had two German shepherds, guard dogs, called Huelga (the Spanish word for ‘strike’) and Boycott, and

later, another named Oso (the Spanish word for ‘bear’). They are buried near him.”

Fernando Chavez

About Fernando Chavez

Fernando Chavez turned 13 years old in 2001. With his two brothers and one sister, he lives with his family in La Paz, a small community near Bakersfield, California. His father, Paul F. Chavez, was the sixth of the eight children of Cesar and Helen Chavez.





What stories do you remember about Cesar E. Chavez?

"I remember stories about my grandfather's courage and bravery. He gave a lot of speeches, and he helped a lot of people. There were stories about hard work in the fields, and terrible things like farmers with guns, people trying to tear the Union apart, and racism—people yelling names. I'm grateful that I don't have to go through that. These stories make me want to stand up and do something when I am older

and braver. I will stand up! But I have also learned from my grandfather that the best way to solve a problem is to talk it out. These stories mean a lot to me, and I'm inspired to help those who go through tough times. And there are still problems—people with no place to live, boycotts, and problems with contracts between farmers and workers."

What is it like to be the grandson of a famous person, and the son of a father who continues to work for "the cause"?

"It feels good, and I'm proud that my grandfather is in history books. But it puts a lot of pressure on me—I can't put a bad name on my grandfather or my family. I know that I need to stay under control."



Fernando, his father, and his brothers

Adapted from an article by Diane L. Brooks